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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [GT](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER: NOV. 4 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Classified By: Ambassador James M. Derham for reasons 1.4 (b&d).

#### Summary

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11. (C) According to most polls, center-right candidate Otto Perez Molina of the Partido Patriota enjoys a slim advantage coming into the Nov. 4 presidential election, but some polls show Alvaro Colom, of the center-left UNE, to be ahead. In the final stages of the campaign, Colom has come across more forcefully in his public presentations, and apparently stopped Perez Molina's advance in the polls. There is little likelihood of significant election day violence. Logistical preparations are well underway, and national and international monitoring missions are set to observe the election. Both candidates plan to prioritize economic growth and combating crime if elected, and both would seek good relations with the United States. However, corruption and influence from organized crime are likely to pose challenges to either a Colom or Perez Molina administration. End Summary.

#### Polls Inconclusive

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12. (U) The latest Vox Latina poll, released October 31, shows center-right Partido Patriota's Otto Perez Molina leading center-left UNE presidential candidate Alvaro Colom by 53% to 47%. In contrast, a Borge & Asociados poll released October 29 shows Colom leading by 39.4% to 35.1%. The October 12 Borge & Asociados poll showed Perez Molina leading Colom by 39.8% to 37.3%. An October 8 Demoscopia poll showed Perez Molina leading Colom by 53.8% to 46.2% of valid responses, and a recent Noguera poll showed Perez Molina leading Colom 39% to 36%.

#### Tenor of Campaign Deteriorates

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13. (SBU) The closing phase of the presidential campaign has been characterized by mudslinging by both candidates. Colom and Perez Molina have each accused the other of knowingly accepting campaign contributions from narcotraffickers, though neither has provided evidence. Perez Molina canceled several final, scheduled debates. In their final campaign appearances, Perez Molina has continued to maintain his focus on improving security, and Colom has stuck with his message of social development and inclusion.

#### Turnout Dynamics

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14. (SBU) The Sunday, Nov. 4 election follows a national holiday on Thursday, November 1. Some Guatemalans will take Friday, Nov. 2 off to make for a four-day vacation weekend. Most observers agree that those who can afford to take

vacation are more likely to vote for Perez Molina, so the timing is prejudicial to him. However, many also believe that, while turnout will fall across the board from the first round (from 60% to perhaps the low 50's) because there are almost no mayoral or congressional elections during the second round, turnout will fall most in rural areas. This is because rural people historically taken a keen interest in the mayoral races that directly affect their interests, but tend to perceive the presidency as distant and less relevant to their lives. This would be prejudicial to Colom.

Diminished Violence

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15. (C) In comparison to the lead-up to the Sept. 9 first-round election, assaults on, and murders of, political activists have diminished ahead of the second round. Partido Patriota security policy analyst Jorge Herrera told poloffs October 5 that this was because there are no local races in October 5 that this was because there are no local races in the second round, so passions have cooled. The few violent incidents during the first round mostly were linked to mayors' use of municipal funds, handing out of jobs, or other disputes over municipal resources. Significant violence in response to the announcement of the election results on the night of Nov. 4 seems unlikely.

#### Seeking Third-Party Support

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16. (C) Both candidates have continued to seek the support of presidential candidates who were eliminated in the first round, their senior level supporters, and prominent members of other parties. Seeking the support of Unionista voters, Colom offered to make Fritz Garcia Gallont again the Minister of Communications. He won the support of popular Villa Nueva Mayor Salvador Gandara, who left the Unionista Party to join UNE. Both Colom and Perez Molina have made public overtures to GANA's presidential candidate, Alejandro Giammattei, who placed third on September 9. Perez Molina offered him any of the Ministries of Health, Communications, or Government; Giammattei appeared to be on the verge of embracing Patriota, but then demurred.

#### Comment

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17. (C) This election could go either way, though Otto Perez Molina has a slight lead in the major polls. Colom's improved, more aggressive rhetoric enabled him to recover some momentum for the final round. The two are now in a statistical dead heat. Embassy does not anticipate significant violence, with the possible -- but statistically unlikely -- exception that the vote is so close that the announced loser can credibly question the results.

Derham